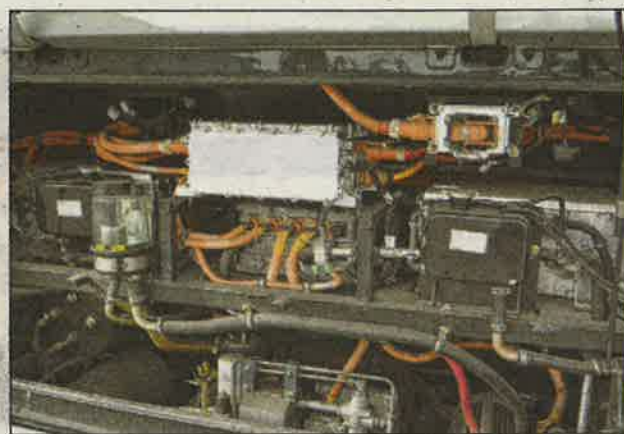




PHOTOS BY ARLA SHEPHARD BULL

BYD Coach & Bus brought this 30-foot BYD electric bus to Mason Transit Authority to show what an electric bus could look like here in Mason County. The transit authority is working with WSDOT to obtain a grant to purchase a 35-foot BYD electric bus.



can't always go after buses like these ourselves."

MTA has waited to purchase an electric bus in part due to high costs and the understanding that the technology would improve over time.

"Years ago when we first looked at electric buses, the technology was too expensive," Fremont said. "Technology has been moving so fast that the parts for the buses are more affordable now and more companies are interested in making them, which drives down the cost."

Other agencies that invested millions into electric buses years ago encountered problems with the emerging technology, Fremont added.

"The technology is only going to get better," she said. "Rather than buying cutting-edge buses years ago, we decided we'd rather wait until the product was perfected so we know it can deliver."

Brannin expects that MTA will save about \$26,000 in fuel costs each year, recovering its investment in about two years. The purchase is also a step toward meeting the governor's mandate requiring government entities move toward alternative fuel by 2018.

"While an electric bus costs more than the diesel option, the cost difference is quickly recaptured through fuel and maintenance savings," she said. "We hope to have a beautiful electric bus rolling into

MTA in approximately 18 months."

Riders will enjoy the quietness and smooth ride of the bus as well, she added.

MTA board member John Campbell recalled riding electric-powered

streetcars in Portland in his youth.

"This sets a precedent and the direction of transportation for the future," he said. "Now we're catching up to the best part of the past while looking toward the future"

# MTA riders to enjoy quiet new electric bus

By Arla Shephard Bull  
Mason County Life

In 18 months, if all goes according to plan, Mason County bus riders will be able to ride the county's first electric bus.

Mason Transit Authority board members voted last month to go in on a statewide effort lead by the Department of Transportation to procure electric buses for transit agencies in rural communities, with funding from the Federal Transit Administration.

"We are excited about the possibility of purchasing an electric bus," said Dannette Brannin, MTA acting general manager. "Electric buses help reduce greenhouse emissions. We want to do our best in providing environmentally safe and friendly options that keep Mason County green."

The funds would pay for the procurement of the bus, as well as the equip-



The interior of a 30-foot BYD electric bus. Funds from the Federal Transit Administration would pay for the procurement of the bus, as well as the equipment, training, tools and infrastructure needed to support the new addition.

ment, training, tools and infrastructure needed to support the new addition.

"This is an opportunity that fell into our lap," said Christina Fremont, MTA

outreach manager. "The grant includes infrastructure, such as charging stations, which is huge. The state recognized that small rural agencies like ours

The BYD electric bus is bidirectional, with inverters that take AC power and convert it to DC power on the bus and then convert it back to AC power to power the motors. "Being bidirectional means you can take one of these buses and in an emergency situation power an American Red Cross tent or power another bus," said Zach Kahn, regional sales manager of BYD Coach & Bus.